

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 28 June 2020

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A.

For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week One

Before beginning prayer with the Sacred Texts, let us take a look at the week ahead in Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

June 29: Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul.

July 3: St. Thomas (feast).

In the Australian Church:

June 28: Geraldton – episcopal ordination of Most Rev. Michael Morrissey (2017).

June 29: Bathurst – anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral, (1865).

July 3: Wilcannia-Forbes - episcopal Ordination of Most Rev. Columba Macbeth-Green (2014).

The Social Justice Calendar:

June 30: World Social Media Day.

June 30: On this day in 1945 – Introduction of unemployment benefits in Australia.

July 1: Commencement of the Fair Work Amendment Act, ensuring fair play and conditions for outworkers in the garment industry.

July 2: 1970 – Yvonne Goolangong Crawley wins Wimbledon.

July 2, 2016 – election of Linda Burney as the first Aboriginal woman member of the Australian Parliament.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

2 Kings 4:8-11 and 14-16

Romans 6:3-4 and 8-11

Matthew 10:37-42.

***Lectio*: Read the First text from 2 Kings 4:8-11 and 14-16.**

Read it in a reverent way. The Word of God is sacred. Let us give ourselves to the sacred text and open our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit calling us forth to respond. Be aware of the Holy Spirit playing on the fibres of your heart as you read. This is the true “oratio” (prayer) of *Lectio Divina*.

***Meditatio*: Understanding the text so that we can make an informed response.**

This is not just a nice story. Rather, it puts before us more than one challenge:

Journey in a definite direction, hospitality and faith. It is a story of faith in the recognition that Elisha (whose name means ‘my God saves’), is a man of God.

Initiation and resourcefulness. The woman in this story is an initiator and one who is resourceful – a Shunammite woman.

The Region is the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The time is the mid-9th century B.C. The time span begins with 1 Kings 16:29 and finishes with 2 Kings 10:17. The situation is that Ahab and his Sidonian wife Jezebel are promoting Canaanite religion as the supreme religion, not faith in the God of Israel. Elisha's ministry is related as a history in 2 Kings: 2 Kings 1 – 2 Kings 9:13 covers the whole history of Elisha's prophetic ministry. As well as faith, journey, hospitality, we are challenged to look at simplicity (the upper room and its furnishings).

Lastly, there is the promise of a child – she had no son. A woman without a son was in a hopeless situation in a patriarchal society. Elisha promises her that she will be gifted by a son – he looks forward to his return when he can witness a child given by God. (I have summarized some of these points from the New Jerome Biblical Commentary 10:43).

Read the text again. If you can, highlight the images which call to your spirit to become involved in the unfolding pilgrimage to the divine light. You may want to respond to this text or wait until you have prayed with it for a couple of days. *Lectio Divina* is a way of life. I have made my response in *Evangelizatio* 1.

Responsorial Psalm. Psalm 88, verses 2-3 and 16-19.

The response is: FOREVER I WILL SING THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD.

This is a psalm of 52 verses, about the promises of God. It is most fitting as a prayer of the Shunammite woman on the birth of a child, and it is fitting as a prayer which Elisha may have prayed in thanksgiving for the generosity of the woman and her husband. Who else would have built an upper room, just for a “holy man” who passed through once a year.

***Lectio:* Read the Second Text: Romans 6:3-4 and 8-11.**

***Meditatio:* A little background to the reading.**

The NJBC notes that chapter 6:1-23 is about freedom of self through union with Christ. The texts we have been given for prayer occur within these boundaries: 3-4 and 8-11. Verse 3 asks the question: Do you not know? Roman Christians, instructed in the Apostolic Catechesis, should be acquainted with the sublime effects of Baptism.

A very important statement is made in Verse 8: “The new life of the Christian is not the object of sensible perception or immediate consciousness. It is perceived only with the eyes of faith. Think of yourselves as dead to sin...” is the conclusion of Paul's argument. The Christian is incorporated into the Body of Christ through the Holy Spirit and thereby shares in its vitality.

Spend time with this text, with an open heart, allowing the Holy Spirit to offer you a word, a sentence, and more for your response. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Acclamation is from: 1 Peter 2:9.

YOU ARE A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY PEOPLE.
PRAISE GOD WHO CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS AND INTO HIS MARVELLOUS LIGHT.

***Lectio:* Read the Gospel text from Matthew 10:37-42.**

Read it slowly, marking or highlighting the words to which the Holy Spirit within you responds. The Holy Spirit will lead you into the sunlight of your relationship with Jesus through this text.

***Meditatio:* Some background so that we can immerse ourselves in the text and make our response.**

Matthew 10: 1-42 is a mission discourse. The text we are given for prayer is the last five verses of the discourse.

Verses 37- 40 speaks of literary characteristics – what Matthew may or may not have changed in his narrative, borrowed from the Synoptic gospels. Whatever the literary complications may be, at the end of the day, we are called to pray with this Gospel, rather than write a thesis

Verses 42: the mention of little ones – this could refer to the disciples/apostles, but more likely it refers to uneducated members of the society in which Jesus lives. It has been observed that if God will reward one who gives a cup of cold water to a disciple, how much more will he reward one who installs an entire city water system! (Cf. NJBC 42:72). An entire town with water! Perhaps the real little ones are the most vulnerable, those without water. Murrurundi, for example, was a town without water. Water was trucked in from the end of 2019, into 2020.

***Evangelizatio* is my LIVED RESPONSE to the sacred scriptures given to me each week by the Church for my formation as a Christian. If I don't respond, they are merely texts on a page. When I do respond, they are my life.**

1. This text is so brutally challenging that one can't escape from it. The questions confront me around every corner: Faith: I have not had anyone challenge my faith as yet. I hope I would remain steadfast. Do I always (in a spirit of faith), recognize a person of God, someone who comes into my life, and speaks well of others, praises the good in others, and leaves me feeling free and positive? How do I rate with simplicity? In the upper room, there was a bed (for rest), a table, stool and lamp. Elisha would not have been reading a book, or using a laptop computer, so what was the table for? For eating? This is the most likely explanation - for eating the meal provided for the prophet. Elisha's servant is attentive to the commands of his master. As for the upper room, it is a getaway place for alone-ness while responding to God, a place of silence, prayer, pondering. Mary and the disciples waited in the upper room for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus sent the disciples to prepare for the paschal meal. "It was a large upper room furnished..." Exploring the importance of the "upper room" in the sacred scriptures, we can ponder on: Ex. 12:7; 2 Kings 1:2; 2 Kings 18:17; 1 Chronicles 28:11; Acts 1:13; Acts 9:37; Acts 20:8. These are just a few texts among many which present us with the upper room, or just the upper as used in its contextual setting. Finally, I have to ask: Where is my "upper room", my place of prayer? A spare room, or corner of the lounge room? Somewhere in the garden. Wherever it is, I must keep it set up for prayer.

2. My response is to a sentence in the commentary: “The new life of the Christian is not the object of sensible perception...it is perceived only with the eyes of faith.” And I know that faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are listed in Galatians 5:22 – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. For me, an example of true faith has always been the life and death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was described on 17 July 1945, as “a Christian martyr whose steadfast faith was a bright light in a dark time.” (A Third Testament, by Malcolm Muggeridge, p. 149). Bonhoeffer, Maximilian Kolbe, and Edith Stein – all bright lights in the darkness and devastation of the Nazi regime.
3. Water challenges me once again. Water is on the agenda of every government in the world – it is there for the reason that the world is predicted to run out of water. On the news one night in February, there was the familiar sight of trucks carrying water to a town in the outback, and saving lives, both human and animal. Murrurundi and Uralla were among a number of towns which were close to closing down – no water through the town, through pipes, - only bottled water. In our parish we have a man and his wife who, each year have been going to Tanzania (until Covid-19), every year, and organizing, with funds raised in our parish, to dig wells and install running water. They have been doing this for over ten years. And what about me? As a monastic woman it is about taking on practical steps, building into every day, a responsible use of water. Finally, the water of life, given by our Saviour – this we can’t afford to neglect. It will never run out, said the Lord to the Samaritan woman at the well. No, it will never run out, but I must keep faith and stay close to the Water of Life.

*Lectio Divina is prayer with the Sacred Scriptures.
We read, we seek to understand with the help of a commentary,
we ponder, we take time for stillness and we respond.
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
Take the Mother of God as your model.*

